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THE AGAMEMNON OF  
AESCHYLUS







THE AGAMEMNON  
OF  
AESCHYLUS

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

EDWARD THRING

*Head Master of Uppingham*

1854-1887

WESTMINSTER

ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO., LTD.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**I**T is no doubt the prerogative of an Editor to criticise, but the freedom that is granted to the Editor in ordinary is clearly denied to the writer of this Introduction. His feelings are as complex as the subject is single—the feelings of a Son for a Father, a pupil for a teacher, a lover of the classics for an acknowledged scholar.

The key of Edward Thring's nature was simplicity.

A thing was right or it was wrong; it was good or it was bad. No fine-drawn modern logic deceived him. His breadth of view was never a cloak to cover the world's vices.

To none then would the great Greek Dramatists appeal more than to him, and of those great poets none would be dearer than Aeschylus. His plays dealt with the primal passions; his craftsmanship was rugged simplicity. High lights and deep shadows: the glaring sun, the dark night:—no twilight: brilliant primary colours, no modern aesthetic half tones.

To Edward Thring this translation was a labour of love extending over long years of an active militant life.

To some, who may read this book, will come back the Old School Hall where to the Upper VI. in solemn conclave assembled he interpreted in nervous forceful English prose the mighty thunderings of the grand Greek poet. This was no common lesson. It was the preaching of a great truth.

But there are many who do not know of these things, to them the book is sent out as the work of a scholar to scholars, while to others it goes forth as the work of a man to men.

Perhaps this little volume arrives too late? For in the mad desire for a strenuous life, when some rush hither some thither, prompted by no motive, or a wrong motive, only hoping that the world may notice their energy, but few are left to pause awhile to think deeply and truly over the great works of literature, of painting, of sculpture, and the great lives—not always strenuous—of those that are gone.

If then too late, still, in the heart of the few some note may vibrate sympathetically. They may recall the days of their youth when the learning of Greek was not always looked upon as an incumbrance, and education was the formation of character rather than the mere acquisition of knowledge.

They may read between the lines the real spirit with which Edward Thring undertook all work that came to his hand, and understand that the words “*θεῖον δόξα*” written at the bottom of the MS. on the completion of the final revision in 1884 were written from the heart.

One final word on behalf of my sisters, to whom the MS. belongs, and on my own behalf. We beg to tender sincere and grateful thanks to the Rev. Canon Skrine, who, pupil under my Father during the early struggles at Uppingham, Scholar of Corpus, Fellow of Merton, and afterwards Warden of Glenalmond, has been kind enough to devote his time to the correcting of the proofs. To no one would we have entrusted the work more willingly.

G. HERBERT THRING.

## AGAMEMNON.

### THE SENTINEL.

**A** BOON, ye gods! Discharge from this hard service,  
This sentry work which drags the long year  
through,

When couched upon the Atridæ palace roof  
On elbow bent, watching, as 'twere a dog,  
I mark the stars in nightly conclave meet.  
And those bright constellations, without peer,  
Lords paramount in heaven, that winter bring  
And summer in their train for mortal men,  
Right well I know them as they come and go.  
And now I sentinel the token light,  
A flash of fire, Troy's message on its tongue,  
And tidings of her fall; so hopeful bides  
A woman's will, in purpose like a man.  
When posted at my couch, with nightly tramp  
Restless, all dew-besprent, where never dream  
Looks gracious down, for hard by, 'stead of sleep,  
Fear keeps joint watch and ward, nor ever lets  
The lids fall down fast sealed on tired eyes.  
Ay, when I think to whistle a tune, or sing  
Scraps of song-countercharm for drowsiness,  
A wail comes out, a moan for this great house,  
Not heart-sound as of old, in gallant trim.  
Fair fall the day, that packing sends our ills,  
When through the gloom shines glad the herald-fire.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hail, thou bright radiance, bringing light of day  
And many a dance to Argos duly set,  
And many a song, to grace this blessed hap.

What ho there! ho!

I go to bear to Agamemnon's queen  
Sure token, that she haste rise from her bed,  
And peal clear-throated welcome, ringing joy,  
Fair answer to this torchlight, if it be  
That Ilium's towers in very sooth are ta'en,  
As this torch-courier bright assurance gives.  
And I myself will dance the good news in;  
My master's luck I count has won the game;  
This beacon work has made the winning throw.  
But soft—how now? leastwise I fain would hold  
My royal master's well-loved hand in mine  
On his return; no more now; I am dumb.  
A mighty hoof has trodden on my tongue,  
And stamped it into silence: yea, the walls  
Themselves would tell, could they but find a voice,  
How ready are my words for those, who know:  
For those, who know not, my forgetfulness.

CHORUS.

Lo! the tenth year, lo!  
Since Priam's mighty foe  
In war's assize,  
Menelaus, royal lord,  
And Agamemnon, in accord,  
Kings of high emprise,  
Twin thrones, sceptres twain,  
From Zeus who reign,  
Sturdy yoke of Atreus' sons,  
All the host of Argos bore,  
An avenging band,  
In a thousand galleys o'er,

## AGAMEMNON.

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From their native land;  
Screaming all afire vast war,  
Like eagles, who in wild despair  
For their fledglings, high in air  
O'er their nest wide circling swing,  
Oared by oarage of the wing;  
All their close, home-brooding pain  
Lost, spent in vain.

Then Apollo hears on high,  
Pan, or Zeus, the piercing cry  
Of these tenants of the sky,  
The bird-clamorous agony,  
And a fiend of doom lets slip,  
With a vengeful aftergrip,  
On the heels of wrong.

So the sons of Atreus both,  
Zeus, the victor strong,  
Zeus, the lord of homes and troth,  
'Gainst the son of Priam wroth,  
Launched upon her quarrel then,  
Hers, the love-queen, sought of men.  
Ay, full many and many a grip  
Sinew-straining, thigh and hip,  
Planted knee in dust; and lance  
Shivering in the opening dance  
Of the battle festival,  
Set for Danaan, set for Troy,  
Set alike for all.  
Ah now, well-a-day, what is  
Is as it is, and all shall be  
Ended as fate may decree.  
After-lure of sweet libation,  
After-lure of lamentation,



## AGAMEMNON.

Tears shed day by day,  
Nought shall charm away  
The persistent wrath, I wot,  
Of sacrifice where fire was not.  
We from that great succour dropped,  
Shreds of manhood, old in years,  
Feebly wield on staves up-propped  
Strength as children, childhood's peers.  
Though the life sap leap amain  
In the child's young heart;  
Young and old alike are vain,  
War hath there no part.  
For the old man in decay,  
All his leafage sere, and thin,  
Crawls along his three-legged way;  
Match them, and the child would win.

Daughter of Tyndareus, great queen,  
Clytemnestra, what high due,  
What of tidings in thy ear,  
Word of sweet persuasive cheer,  
Sends thee votary round?  
Every altar of the Gods  
That joy in city towers,  
Nether gods, and gods above,  
Heavenly presences, and powers,  
Busy haunts of men who love,  
Flames with offerings crowned.  
Here and there, around, about,  
Many a cresset tosses high,  
Salved with soft, true, coaxing spell  
Of an unction pure  
From the inmost palace cell.  
Tell me, tell me whatsoe'er,  
Lady, it is thine to tell,

And mine to hear;  
Healer be of this our care;  
Evil-boding oft it broods;  
Then comes gentle-smiling Hope  
From the altar fires to cope  
With the ravening grief that gnaws  
Round the heart with sleepless jaws.  
My tongue high warrant hath to tell  
Of faithful omens by the way,  
The princely leaders that befell;  
For still from heaven old time to me  
A strength coequal to my day  
Hath given, a sweet compulsive lay.  
I sing how forth the bold bird sent,  
With spear, and fierce exacting hand,  
Achaia's twin-throned might, two chiefs  
Of Hellas' sons with one intent

Unto the Trojan strand.

The king of birds set for the kings of the seafaring  
band.

One eagle black, one white of tail,  
Hard by the royal towers alight,  
They took their station full in sight,  
On the spear hand, and a hare  
All big with young their talons tear,  
Poor timid creature, clutched midway,  
And its fleet foot stopped for aye.

Woe worth the word, woe worth the word, but the good  
shall have masterie.

So the right noble army seer  
Looked on the two sharpset for fight,  
The two in mood, the Atridæ twain,  
So he looked, and he was ware  
Of the feasters on the hare,  
That royal pair.

Then he oped his eyes and spake,  
A prophet word spake he.  
This war-path, there comes a day,  
Shall Priam's city make a prey,  
And all before the towers at large  
That range, the city's wealthy charge,  
Shall ruin harry, herd and flock,  
With one rude, iron-handed shock.  
But let no blighting spell from heaven the mighty curb  
of war o'ercloud and blast,  
Troy's army-curb; for Artemis upon the house an evil  
eye hath cast,  
Maid Artemis an evil eye,  
On her father's winged hounds,  
For that poor hare with all her young unborn so  
foully slain,  
And loathes the banquet of the eagles twain.  
Woe worth the word, woe worth the word, but the  
good shall have masterie.  
Thus far doth the goddess fair  
On the tender life new born  
From the lionesses' womb,  
Look with gracious care,  
And on all,  
The dug that love,  
The younglings small  
Of the wild beasts of the field;  
So she claims these tokens fair,  
Fair, yet fraught with bale,  
Shall full issue yield,  
And none should fail.  
And thee I call, the Healer,  
Thou lord of joy and praise,  
O check her, that she work not  
Wind-baffled, sour delays,

And idlesse ship-betethered,  
Through weary, weary days;  
Thewhile a sacrifice unheard of, strange, of deadly cheer,  
An inbred germ of hatred she is ever bringing near,  
That knows no fear of husband, for still there lies in wait  
Wrath fearful, backward sweeping,  
An unforgetful hate,  
Wrath, wily, child-avenging,  
Home-keeping at his gate.

Such fateful words of mingled woe and weal  
With mighty blessing, forth did Calchas peal,  
A message from the portent  
Of wayside, boding wings,  
A message for the palace,  
A message for the kings.  
Chant ye a like strain, chant,  
Chant, let the burden be,  
Woe worth the word, woe worth the word, but the good  
shall have masterie.

Zeus, if but this name be dear,  
Whosoe'er he be,  
Lo I frame it to his ear.  
Never, never clue I find,  
Weighing all things in my mind,  
Save in Zeus at last,  
If in very sooth I may  
This vain load of care away  
From my heart off cast.  
A mighty one there was of old,  
All defiant, strong, and bold,  
Naught can he say,  
Past is his day.  
He who came after and took up the play,

Met with his match and has vanished away.  
But who shouts with heart and voice  
Zeus, the victor king,  
In his heart-wish shall rejoice,  
Nor lack anything;  
Zeus, who makes man walk aright,  
Zeus, who sets this firm decree,  
Man must suffer wise to be.  
Pain's well-conned lesson drops remorse,  
Like dew, upon the heart in sleep,  
Till e'en th' unwilling learn perforce.  
Such grace, methinks, the gods give, whose high throne  
Is based on force alone.  
So then the chieftain old uprose,  
The chieftain of the Achæan fleet,  
No word spake he 'gainst prophet woes,  
But breathed accord  
With fortune's storm that on him beat;  
What time, windbound, with emptied store,  
Where Chalcis faces Aulis' shore,  
And Aulis' sullen waters roar,  
The host of Hellas wearied sore,  
By ill winds prisoned fast;  
Winds, that from the Strymon blew;  
O, the bitter holiday.  
Hunger, moorings all untrue,  
Shipmen drifting, castaway,  
Unthrift bane of hull and rope,  
When the weary, weary hours  
Racked and wasted the fresh hope  
Of the Achæan powers.  
Then rose the seer, and spake aloud,  
That bitter wind to bar,  
A spell, that down those chieftains bowed  
With anguish bitterer far,

## AGAMEMNON.

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And Artemis the burden of his strain;  
So that they smote their sceptres on the plain,

Nor could from tears refrain.

Then the aged warrior-king  
Lifted up his voice, and cried,  
Woe, woe not to do this thing.  
Yet woe, woe to bring the knife  
Upon my child's young life,

My child, my pride.

How by the altar stand?

How wet a father's hand

With streams of virgin blood that flow

From the death blow?

Choice of ills whate'er betide.

How can I fail the ships? How balk

This banded fellowship in arms?

'Tis meet their hearts with ire, fierce ire and sore,  
Exceeding fierce, should pant for the blood charms,  
The potent storm-spell of a virgin's gore.

Ah me! ah me!

May the issue blessed be.

But when fate's bridle he upon him cast,

His spirit blew another blast,

A foul, and damned resolve, and passed  
To an all-daring change at last.

For mortals bold and bolder grow,  
When the vile tempter's maddening blow  
Once works the first dark deed of woe.

So dared the king,

In a woman's quarrel he,

The slayer of his child to be,

Slain to set the battle free,

With heaven's blessing on the ships.

Alas! she called her father dear,

She cried for mercy then,

Nought recked they of her tears, or life,  
Those keen-set, warlike men.  
The prayer was prayed,  
Then o'er the altar-stone,  
Like some poor fawn,  
Her father bade the young men raise on high  
The Maid,  
Low fallen, all forlorn,  
With all her robes about her laid,  
And, her fair lips to guard,  
That passage of her voice be barred,  
By rude, dumb, gagging might,  
Lest the house she ban and blight.  
Then down her veil of saffron lawn  
She poured upon the ground,  
And launched a pleading glance on each  
Of all the slayers round,  
And fain would ope her lips in speech,  
Fair as a picture. Ah! full oft,  
Within her father's hall,  
Her virgin voice and soft,  
At many a gallant festival,  
With loving praise  
Had sung her father's thrice blessed, happy days.  
That which after there befell  
My eye nor saw, nor tongue shall tell.  
But Calchas wrought;  
No secret of his craft but to full end was brought.  
A just hand gives to all in turn  
That he who suffers truth shall learn;  
Greet with farewell or ere it come,  
For come it will,  
The herald of the coming ill;  
Early know is early pine:  
Whist, thou 'lt see it at morning-shine.

## AGAMEMNON.

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O may good action still good ending bring,  
Since hard by she now wills it, who doth stand  
Sole fence and guardian power of this land.

*The QUEEN enters.*

Queen Clytemnestra, with due homage I  
Approach your high estate, for meet it is  
To honour the liege-lady of the land  
What time the throne is empty of its lord.  
And be thy tidings full of trust, or not,  
That with fair-speaking hopes thy censer burns,  
Glad would I hear, nor take thy silence ill.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

With gladsome message, as the proverb is,  
May morning from glad mother night be born.  
I have a joy to tell thee beyond hope:  
The Argive host have Priam's city ta'en.

CHORUS.

What say'st? the word has 'scaped, I'll not believe 't

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I say that Troy is ours. Speak I clear now?

CHORUS.

Joy glides into my heart, and calls up tears.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thine eye convicts thee of a loyal heart.

CHORUS.

Ay; but what warrant hast to prove thy word?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Enough; why not? so Heaven trick us not.



CHORUS.

Did some dream-shape thy ready credence win?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No fancy take I from a sleep-drenched brain.

CHORUS.

Then, lacking dream-wings, rumour fed thee fat.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Am I a silly girl that thus you mock?

CHORUS.

What age, pray, may the city's capture be?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Old as the night that bare yon morning light.

CHORUS.

What messenger could compass such despatch?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The Fire-god; he bade Ida's light ride post.  
Torch after torch sped hitherward relays  
Of courier fire. First Ida to the crag  
Of Lemnos, hight Hermæan; Athos third,  
The peak of Zeus, caught the great torch in turn,  
And welcomed it from the island; then with glee,  
On travelling in its power, the blazing pine  
With one o'ermastering swing on the back o' the sea  
Tossed its bright message to Macistus' towers,  
Like a great sun all gleaming golden light.  
No laggard he, nor captive ta'en by sleep  
In senseless bonds, passed his part duly on.  
And from afar the beacon light went post,

Reached the Euripus streams, and signal made  
To watchmen of Messapium; they lit up  
An ancient pile of heather, fire to fire  
Gave answer, and the message onward sped.  
Then the strong glare in no wise growing dim,  
Like a bright moon sprang o'er Æsopus' plain,  
Leapt on Cithæron's crag, and ready there  
Another relay roused of herald fire.  
The watchman did not turn his back upon  
The bright far-travelled stranger, honouring it  
By burning twice as much as those before.  
Then on Gorgopis, and its bay, the light  
Shot, and the height of Ægiplanctus won  
Compelled the marshalled fire make no delay.  
With might and main a right great beard of flame  
They onwards flung in fiery might outcast  
O'er the great headland, far in front that stands,  
And sees the gulf Saronic at its feet.  
Then it swooped down, and reached Arachne's height,  
Our city's neighbour, standing sentinel,  
And then it perched upon this roof o' the kings,  
This light, the lineal heir of Ida's fire.  
So run the torch-runners the appointed course;  
Each takes from other, all in change fulfilled,  
This wins the race both first and last in one.  
Such sign I give and voucher for my words;  
Such message sends my lord from Troy to me.

## CHORUS.

My prayer shall rise again to heaven for this.  
But tell it all once more, an if thou wilt;  
Still would I hear, and hear, and sate my wonder

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Troy is in Achæan hands this day.

Methinks a cry of severance, unblending,  
Is loud within the city walls; go, pour  
In the same vessel vinegar and oil,  
You'll parley with two foes at bitter feud.  
So of twain fortunes voices twain, apart,  
Strike on the ear of vanquishers and victims.  
Stretched on the ground the one the bodies clasp  
Of husbands, brothers, and on aged sires  
Their children, and from throats no longer free  
In utter woe bewail their dearest lost.  
Whilst those night-rovers, hungry, battle-spent,  
Their toil posts at such food the city gives  
Unbilled, unmarshalled, just as each  
Drew a chance-happy lot at fortune's hand.  
Already in the captive homes of Troy  
They house them, well rid of the chill night-frosts  
And dews i' the open field; and now, poor wretches,  
They'll sleep unsentinelled the careless night.  
Give they due honour to the gods o' the land  
They've ta'en, and all their holy fastnesses,  
The captors will not captived be in turn.  
But let no lust of the forbidden thing  
Fall on the host mastered by greed of gain,  
Ere they return, for needs must they return,  
Needs must have safety, and trace back again  
The second limb of the racecourse all the way.  
But if the army march shackled by guilt,  
Lo! then will wake the curse of those who died,  
E'en if no sudden judgment light upon them.  
Such tidings can you hear from me, a woman.  
May all end well, and see no turn o' the scale.  
I have ta'en of many blessings fruitful heed.

## CHORUS.

Thy woman's words fair sense, e'en like a man's,

Sense sensible propound, and I fair thanks  
On thy firm surety proffer to the gods,  
For grace a grateful end of toil hath wrought.  
Zeus, lord of all, and friendly night,  
That brought us glorious gain,  
And round the towers of Troy hast pight  
A close sure-netted seine;  
So that neither great, nor small  
Might win to overtop the net,  
Of slavery wide-set,  
The pen of doom,  
Where all found room.  
Thee I worship, Zeus the king,  
Lord of homes and troth,  
Thee, whose hand hath wrought this thing;  
Who 'gainst Paris long ago  
Hath bent thy bow,  
So that not a jot too soon,  
Not a moment late, might fly  
No vain bolt from out the sky.  
Zeus, great Zeus, hath struck the blow;  
He who tracks it this may know.  
They have fared, as whilome he  
Set his decree.  
I heard one cry  
The gods deign not man's ways regard  
When tender, awe-encircled bloom  
Downtrodden, in the dust is marred;  
But 'twas a scoffer's lie.  
It is proved; the sons of pride,  
Men of violence and blood,  
Who all justice have defied,  
Houses filled full with a flood,  
Without measure, without bound,  
This truth have found.

May my lot be harmless, kind,  
So that he, whose heart is sound,  
Full content may find.

But who spurneth with despite  
The great altar-stone of right,  
Wealth will never fence him round  
'Gainst oblivion blind.

A curse is there, a tempter's spell,  
An evil-hatching child of hell;  
He must on, no help, no cure,  
He must all endure.

Mischief glares a baleful light  
Like base metal seeming-bright,  
But it blackens to the sight

On the touchstone sure.  
How like a child in chasing  
A bird that flies before,  
He set within the city

A deadly, fretting sore.  
No god hears the prayer he prays,  
Whoso walketh in such ways;  
Guilty at heaven's bar, though stout,  
Vengeance comes, and wipes him out.

In such wise Paris came,  
Ate at the kindly board,  
And wrought a deed of shame,  
Stole the lady from her lord.  
Swiftly fled she through the gate,  
Left to friend and country there  
Clash of shield, and arming sweat,  
Toil of shipwrights, as she bare  
Wealth of ruin, havoc, hate,  
For her dower to Ilium fair;  
Dared the deed she should not dare.  
Then with many a groan

Spake the wise men of the house,  
Spake, and made their moan.

Woe, woe, thou House, and Princes, woe,  
Woe for the bridal bed,  
The sweet memorials her trace that show,  
The trace of her that fled.

He stands in his dishonour mute,  
No bitter word spake he,  
His sad eyes strain for her that's gone,  
In wistful agony.

Gone, gone across the sea, but love  
Still sees a phantom form to move,  
And queen it in his hall.

He hates the statues in their place,  
So beautiful in moulded grace,  
But in their stony eyes  
Love's glamour dies.

Tender dream-shapes, fancies sweet,  
Come the sense to cheat  
With idle gain;

For idle is it happy sights to see,  
Only to find the winsome vision flee,  
Slipped through the grasp,  
Ere we can clasp,

Ah! never, never more to be,  
Borne away on wings that sweep  
Down the fleeting paths of sleep.  
Such sorrow sits at hearth and board,

Yea, passing pains;  
For all the great confederate band,  
That sallied forth from Hellas' strand,  
Grief, that the tough heart strains,  
In every home is lord.  
Aye, many a barb sticks deep.

Each knows his own, whom forth they sent,

And how do they return?

The house its warrior waits, and lo!

A little dust, an urn.

Ares money-changing sits,

Men his coin; in battle rout,

Scales in hand, he weighs them out;

And from Ilium's pyres he sends

Some sorry bits,

A little gold-dust home to friends,

O bitter, bitter rue,

And packs the seemly rows of bronze in lieu

Of men with ashes as blood-due.

They heave a sigh with fond words on their tongue

For one who knew war well;

And he—with honour in the bloody fray

For the strange woman fell.

So under breath they mutter on this wise,

The fretting heartsore spreads amain

Against the Atridæ twain,

Plaintiffs in war's assize.

And they, the beautiful, ah! they

Around the ramparts make their stay

In tenements of Ilium's clay,

Fast shut in foreign earth,

Their everlasting berth.

When many tongues in wrath are wagging,

Beware, beware;

They work a nation's verdict,

A curse is there.

Care in my heart

Watches to hear,

Out of the darkness,

Some deed of fear.

Though men of blood may slay,  
The eye of God sleeps not.  
Though fortune's fools may play,  
And justice be forgot,  
There comes an hour, the doomsters black  
The wheel of life send circling back,  
When they to nothingness are brought;  
And once in the dim darkness caught,  
All their might is turned to nought.  
When all tongues trumpet fair,  
Beware, beware.  
The death-bolt is in act to fly  
From Zeus, the lightning of his eye.  
My verdict is—a state too low for spite.  
May I not cities take, nor yet  
Be ta'en, and see my life 'neath others set.  
Now this fair herald fire has shot  
Swift rumour all the city through;  
And be it true, or be it not,  
Who can avail to know? forfend  
That heaven a lying witness send.  
Who is so slight, or clipped of wit,  
At this new firebrand beck  
To fire his heart, and at a change  
Of tale, his spirit check.  
Befits a woman's mind  
To strike hands on a happy find  
Before it comes to light.  
Stray rumours ready entrance make,  
And break the fence  
Of female sense.  
A woman's story quickly slips  
From woman's lips,  
And dies as quick.



## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Soon shall we have assurance of these lights  
Torch-marshalled, courier beacons, fiery posts,  
An they be true, or, like a dream, this flame  
Has flattering come, and filched our sense away.  
For lo, where comes a herald from the shore  
Embowered in olive branches; thirsty dust,  
Mud's kinsman, tells me that no voiceless post,  
Nor lighting up the mountain logs ablaze  
With smoke of fire he'll witness, but will either  
By word of mouth bring joy to higher pitch,  
Or—but beshrew aught else, it must not be.  
May good to come still better good before.

## CHORUS.

Who prays another fortune on this land,  
Reap he the harvest of his cankered spleen.

## HERALD.

Dear earth, dear threshold of my native land,  
Ten times the sun has made the year, and I  
Salute thee now at last, one hope in port  
Of many hopes all shipwrecked, only one.  
For never did I count in Argive soil  
To find in death the dear lot of a tomb.  
And so I greet thee, earth, I greet thee, sun,  
And Zeus, high o'er the land, and Pythian king,  
Thee, launching no more shafts, methinks, on us.  
Enough, enough, upon Scamander's banks,  
Thy wrath went forth against us; turn thee now,  
And Saviour be, and Healer, King Apollo  
And all the Gods of battle I invoke,  
Him too, my liege-lord Hermes, most dear herald,  
Worship of heralds; and the Hero powers,  
That sent, with kindly grace to welcome back

The remnant left, the gleanings from the spear.  
Hail royal halls, hail loved abodes, and thrones  
Revered, and ye sunfacing deities,  
If ever in old days, smile now with eyes  
Of love, in seemly wise take back your King.  
He comes to you, he comes, a light to chase  
Darkness, light free to all, King Agamemnon.  
To give him welcome, greet him, 'tis his due.  
His arm hath dug Troy down, and tilled her plain,  
And made an end with the great judgment spade  
Of Zeus; the altars are no more, the shrines  
Gone, and her sons clean perished from the land,  
So strong a yoke hath King Atreides set  
Fast round Troy's city: lo! he comes to you,  
Rich both in years and fortune; worthiest he  
Of honour above all men now alive.  
For Paris nor the whole incorporate city  
Can boast their deed was greater gain than loss.  
The judgment went against him in the suit,  
For theft, and for abduction, all his spoil  
He lost, and reaped in one great crop of ruin  
House, lineage, stock and stem, land, city, all.  
A double forfeit Priam's sons have paid.

## CHORUS.

Joy to thee, herald of the Achæan host.

## HERALD.

I joy, and now, should heaven so bid, would die.

## CHORUS.

So strong hath wrought love of thy native land?

## HERALD.

Aye, that my eyes drop tears from very joy.

CHORUS.

Thou wert infected with a pleasant ill.

HERALD.

How now? advise. I master not thy speech.

CHORUS.

When thus love-smitten, and love-sought by us.

HERALD.

Did the land yearn for us, as we for them?

CHORUS.

So that for very gloom of soul I groaned.

HERALD.

Whence came this load of care, the army's bane?

CHORUS.

I find a dose of silence good 'gainst harm.

HERALD.

How so, the King away hadst fear for any?

CHORUS.

I take thy word, and well could wish to die.

HERALD.

Yea, 'tis well over, and the time was long,  
And something we can say was well, well say it:  
Yet he who lists might fault find, ah! for who  
Save God is scatheless ever, all his years?  
Yea should I speak of toil, hardships in camp,  
The seldom landing, and poor pallets then,  
What not of sorrow, what did we not meet

Our daily portion? On the land worse still,  
More, and more hateful; all night long we lay  
Close to the enemies' walls, from sky and earth  
Dank marsh dew dropped, and cankered all our clothes,  
And shagged our hair like beasts; what boots to tell  
Of winter, when the snows of Ida sent  
Death from their stores, the very birds were killed;  
Or heat, what time the flat, smooth sea fell back  
Upon its midday, windless bed, and slept.  
Why mourn we any more? the toil is past,  
Past, and the care is past, nought stirs the dead  
To make them ever think to wake again.  
Why should the living vex at fortunes stroke,  
Or count upon the tally the lives spent?  
Nay, but I shake hands gladly with our lot;  
For us the remnant of the Argive host  
Gain conquers loss, nought counter in the scale.  
So well-a-day, we look the sun i' the face,  
And flitting homeward over land and sea  
Boast as we go, fallen is Troy at last,  
These spoils of war, the splendours of old time,  
The Argive host has hung up on their walls,  
Prize to the Gods of Hellas, and all we  
That hear, may glory to the city give,  
And our great leaders; honour be to Zeus  
Whose grace hath wrought it. I have said my say.

## CHORUS.

Thy words have conquered me, I'll not deny it.  
Good lessons age is ever young to learn.  
This House and Clytemnestra most, methinks,  
Have charge of this, yet I may share their wealth.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Loud was my shout of joy long long ago,

When the first courier fire by night came in  
With news of capture, and Troy's overthrow;  
And then one chiding said, Have torches power  
To bend thee to belief that Troy is sacked?  
Oh lightly does a woman's heart leap up.  
Yea I was all astray, no doubt of it.  
But yet I offered, and in womanly wise  
Now one man now another took it up,  
And shouted through the city, victory,  
A shout of happy omen, as they lulled  
The sweet flame incense-fed at many a shrine.  
And now what need for thee to tell me more,  
The King himself will all the tale unfold.  
But that my welcome with all speed may meet  
Best my right noble lord on his return,  
And fittest (aye, for woman's eye can see  
No fairer light than this, which bids her ope  
The gates, when heaven has brought her lord safe home  
His warfare ended,) tell my lord from me,  
To come with speed, the darling of the city.  
And may he find, when he is home again,  
A faithful wife, just as he left her there,  
A watch-dog in the house most true to him,  
Foe to the evil-hearted, and in all  
Like as before, in the long weary years  
In no whit having tampered with his seal.  
I know no joy, nor breath of evil fame  
From other man, more than the dyeing of brass.  
And such a boast brimful of truth is one  
That well befits a noble lady's lips.

## CHORUS.

The queen herself has spoken, an thou heed'st.  
A right fair speech for clear interpreter.  
But, herald—Menelaus, tell me now,

AGAMEMNON.

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Will he return, does he come back with you  
Safe with the rest, the people's loved liege-lord?

HERALD.

It may not be; to tell a false fair tale  
Can give no harvest to my friends for long.

CHORUS.

Canst thou not make thy tale both true and good?  
Divided, these two are not lightly hid.

HERALD.

His place in th' Argive host knows him no more;  
Gone is he, and his ship. No falsehood this.

CHORUS.

Say did ye see him put to sea from Troy.  
Or did a storm, which all felt, snatch him off.

HERALD.

No archer ever made a better shot,  
Short words a long disaster have set forth.

CHORUS.

What rumour passed amongst his shipmates, pray,  
Was he alive or dead, how went their say?

HERALD.

None knows to give sure tidings, save the sun,  
Who earth and all things earth-born hath in charge.

CHORUS.

I prithee tell me how upon the fleet  
This tempest came and ended by heaven's wrath.

## HERALD.

I may not mar a sweet, fair-spoken day  
With tongue of ill. Heaven's jealous of its honour.  
But when, abhorred disaster as the theme,  
An army reeling jeopardized, there comes  
Sour visaged, such a postman to the land,  
Tells of the commonwealth a general wound,  
But many a victim out of many a home,  
Sons sacrificed,  
Beneath the double lash which Ares loves,  
Twy-bladed doom, two bloody yoke-devils,—  
Ah, meet it is, close-packed with such a load,  
He chant this dirge of hell; but I, can I,  
Glad messenger of happy fortunes saved,  
Come to a joyous city full of ease,  
Say, can I jumble good and ill? how tell  
Of tempest not unfraught with ire from heaven?  
Water and fire, old wranglers, plighted troth,  
Conspiring, made the bargain good in ruin,  
By whelming the unhappy Argive host.  
'Twas night, uprose the deadly-boisterous waves,  
The Thracian blasts dashed ship 'gainst ship, and they  
At the fierce shock, i' the storm, with rainlashed surge  
Of hurricanes, passed out of mortal sight,  
Whirled by an evil pilot off, and when  
The bright light of the sun up came, we see  
The great Ægean flecked with flowers of death,  
Dead men and shattered wrecks. Us, and our ship  
All whole in hull, or stole, or begged away,  
Some God, no mortal man, with hand on helm;  
And saviour fortune sat on board and steered;  
So we nor felt the furious seas in haven,  
Nor stranded on the ironbound coast; at last  
In the white daylight, 'scaped from a sea death,  
No more the sport of chance, we fed our thoughts

oding on fresh disaster, all the host  
 e stricken, battered thus despitefully.  
 d now if any of them breathe this air  
 ey speak of us as dead and gone, nought else.  
 d we deem them in like ill case, ah me!  
 y all end well, but Menelaus first  
 d foremost hope to see return again,  
 least if any searching ray of the sun  
 d him alive and seeing light, so Zeus  
 vise, who wills not to wipe out the race,  
 od hope there is he will come home once more.  
 far my tale, and so far truth you've heard.

CHORUS.

Who was 't that gave the name,  
 True, to the echo true?  
 One, methinks, we cannot see  
 She foreordained who knew,  
 Who set his tongue with happy aim  
 On Helen's name,  
 With her bridemaids, who came,  
 Lady of Discord,  
 Since right well  
 Handmaid she of hell,  
 Hell on ship, and man, and tower,  
 From her delicate-woven bower,  
 Sailed by Zephyr's power.  
 Many a huntsman on their trail,  
 Many a war-dog clad in mail,  
 As they plied the stealthy oar,  
 Followed, till their ships they moor  
 Hard by Simois' leafy shore,  
 On a bloody feud.  
 Wrath unbalked of purpose forged  
 In very sooth a marriage bond



For Ilium's town so fond.  
By those, who set at naught the board,  
And Zeus of hearth and home the lord,  
In after years she made  
Full price be paid;  
Yea all, who chorused blithe and free,  
The bridal melody,  
The nuptial song, which it befell  
The bridegroom's kin to swell. .  
And Priam's ancient city  
Soon learnt another song,  
A deeply wailing ditty,  
And Paris called ere long  
Death's bridegroom, what time first  
Full many a day of weeping  
For her poor children's blood  
She in her anguish nursed.  
E'en so a house has let  
A lion grim, no milkling,  
Become its pet.  
Unweened at first, and tender  
In life's gay, opening scene,  
All gentle, childhood's playmate,  
And old men's joy, I ween,  
In many a bosom cradled,  
Just like a little child,  
Pleased to be stroked and fawning,  
From hunger mild.  
Time passes, he unmasketh  
The instincts of his race,  
His pleasant nature changes,  
In lawless case.  
He gluts himself unbidden  
With bones, and blood, and flesh,  
And all the house is spattered

With bloodspots fresh.  
All helpless stand the household  
At that mighty, murderous pest,  
High priest of death from heaven,  
To vex the house unblest.  
She came, methinks, on Ilium like a dream  
Of blissful calm, entranced in breathless hour,  
A gentle form, wealth's idol she did seem,  
A dart shot out from eyes of softest power,  
A bloom of love heart-pricking, beauty's flower;  
Then she fell away aside,  
Wrought a bitter aftertide  
To the marriage hour;  
Deadly in home, and deadly in bower,  
On the Priamidæ fiercely she fell,  
Led on by Zeus, home-guardian power,  
Well-spring of bride-tears, demon of hell.  
There holds 'mongst men a grandsire saw,  
An ancient word full wise,  
That fortune grown to stately height  
Conceives, nor childless dies,  
And that the fruit of happy days  
Is sorrow without fill.  
But I alone in judgment stand;  
Lo, 'tis the deed of ill,  
That breeds a brood in aftertime,  
Each foul birth like the parent crime,  
But they, who righteous measure heed,  
Ne'er fail in happy seed.  
But arrogant despite grown old  
Is wont to breed despite again  
Or now, or now, when time is ripe,  
Fed ever young on wrongs of men,  
And young despite brings forth a child,  
Disdain, and lo, twin shoot of bale

A fiend hight Recklessness, 'gainst whom  
 Nor arms, nor battle ranks prevail,  
 So foul and damned: and these abide,  
 And still within the house find room,  
 The child-fiends like their parents are,  
 For ever two black kings of doom.  
 But righteousness in smoky hovels shines  
 And honours holy life,  
 On palaces all gold-encrusted, bright,  
 With unclean hands within,  
 She deigns not cast her eye, but turns her quite.  
 Pure homes her presence win,  
 She heeds not power of wealth false stamped with praise,  
 But fashions all things at the last to a true end always.

Ho, Monarch, hail,  
 Hail Atreus' son,  
 Smiter of Troy,  
 How voice thee welcome true?  
 How without alloy  
 Give thee homage due?  
 Neither overstep  
 Nor fall short, and fail  
 In observance meet  
 As our lord we greet?  
 Honour oft a semblance is,  
 Many know not truth,  
 Ready eyes weep with the sad,  
 Natheless sorrow's tooth  
 Touches not the heart, and they  
 With like seeming join the while  
 In the gladness of the glad,  
 Force unwilling cheeks to smile.  
 But the master knows his sheep,  
 And the false-glad eye

Fawning with a watery love  
Shepherd craft can spy.

O my king,  
When thou didst arm the warrior band  
For Helen's sake in days of old,  
Thou wert pictured in command,  
Yea, truth must be told,  
With a right unskilful hand  
On thy heart rudder-string.  
What time thou didst bring  
Hopes from altars bold and high  
To men gathered there to die.  
And now an end is come, for them  
Who well have wrought it, perils past,  
No skin-deep flatterers, rancour gone,  
Turn round a friendly face at last.  
But time will show,  
And thou wilt know  
By sure assay  
Whose heart is true,  
Untoward who  
Homekeeping here bears sway.

## AGAMEMNON.

Needs must I first greet Argos, and the gods  
O' the land, joint workers with me of return,  
And that just retribution, which I wrung  
From Priam's city. The Gods held assize,  
Judged on no hearsay evidence, and gave  
Their votes, not one dissenting, against Troy,  
The warrant of destruction and of slaughter,  
Into the urn of death; by the other urn  
Stood Hope, but no man filled it up.—  
The smoke still witnesseth the city's ta'en,  
The victim fires of doom still live to tell it,

Down dying as they die the ashes reek,  
And fill the air with richest steam of wealth.  
We render to the gods a debt for this  
Of gratitude deep graven on our hearts,  
Since we have planted toils exceeding strong.  
The Argive beast of prey, the horse's youngling,  
The bold shield-brandishers, have laid the city  
Low i' the dust with a fierce leap of onslaught,  
'Long of a woman, when the Pleiads set.  
The lion grim sprang o'er the battlements  
Ravening, and lapped his fill of blood of kings.  
So long a greeting give I to the gods,  
To them is paid my first say; now for thee,  
And thy thoughts, old man, for I well remember,  
You have me with you, I say yea to them,  
Full few are they who have it in their blood  
To render loving homage to success,  
Nor stint it; oftentimes spiteful venom sits  
Close at the heart, and doubles all the weight  
For him who is infected with this ill.  
For first his own misfortune weighs him down,  
And then he groans to see another's weal.  
Well can I speak it, for I know 't right well,  
My friends, who showed a fair front loyal-wise,  
Were but a mirrored counterfeit of love,  
Ghosts of a shadowed semblance; only one,  
Odysseus, he that sailed 'gainst his will,  
Once yoked, pulled with me steady in the traces:  
Be he or dead or living, this I say.  
Now for the rest, the city, and the gods.  
We will hold common session, and take counsel  
In full assembly; what we find well set  
We must, as time goes on, devise to let  
Well set remain; and if there be that wants  
A healer's physic, with a loving hand

We will essay to break the mischief off  
 By fire, or knife, or ere it reach a head.  
 Now to the palace will I turn my steps,  
 And on my hearthstone first salute the gods,  
 Who sent me forth, and brought me back again.  
 May victory, since it followed, still abide.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Men of the city, reverend sires of Argos,  
 I shame not to recount my wifely love  
 In presence of you all, for bashful fear  
 Dies in the heart with time; so I will tell  
 No borrowed tale, the burden of my life,  
 What time my lord tarried at Ilium.  
 First, that a woman, of the masculine arm  
 Bereft, should sit all lonely in her halls,  
 O 'tis a fearful lot; as in her ears  
 Cross-purposed rumour pours a thousand tales.  
 Now one comes, now another, loud i' the house,  
 Piles woe on woe, each eldest worst; lo now,  
 If my good lord had met with all those wounds  
 Of which report came trickling in, he had been  
 Riddled more full of holes than any net.  
 Had he been slain, as many a story told,  
 Good sooth, a triple-bodied Geryon he;  
 A second Geryon, he could boast to have ta'en,  
 Thick over him, for under matters not,  
 A triple coverlet of earth, thrice slain,  
 Once for each several body reft of life.  
 Along of such cross-rumours many a time  
 The death-noose round my neck was loosed above  
 By other hands which rescued me perforce.  
 Hence too thy son is not in presence here,  
 The common centre of all plighted troth  
 'Twixt me and thee, Orestes, as he should be.

Be not amazed, our kind ally and friend  
Strophius of Phocis, has him safe in charge,  
Setting before me twofold danger, first,  
Thy peril under Ilium, also, should  
The clamorous commons broken loose o'erthrow  
The government, for 'tis the way of men  
To give the fallen man another kick.  
Yea, such a plea carries no falsehood with it.  
For me—

All the quick springing fountains of my tears  
Are dried, and drained of their last drop, believe me.  
And traces sore in eyes, O late to rest,  
I bear of weeping; ever weeping still  
For thy torch signals ever left untended.  
Full oft in dreams the war-note of the gnat  
With tiny trumpet startled me from sleep,  
The while I saw thee suffer more, methinks,  
Of ill, than time could compass while I slept.  
Now it is passed, this sorrow all is passed,  
And I would call thee, good my lord, with heart  
Emptied of grief, the watch-dog of the fold,  
The saviour haulyard of the ship, the prop  
And pillar of the lofty roof firm-set,  
A father's only child, and land beyond  
All hope descried by sailors, fairest day  
Seen after storm, a rill of running water  
To thirsty wayfarer. Aye, in good sooth,  
A joyous thing it is to have clean outrun  
The deadly grip of fortune, so I honour  
His worth with these fair titles. Yet forbend  
Aught evil, Heaven! for evil have we borne

[*The QUEEN kneels.*]

Enough in days gone by. Come, pray thee, good  
My lord beloved, step from thy chariot down,  
Set not on earth thy foot, O king, which made

Havoc of Ilium; maidens, tarry not,  
 Ye, who have charge with tapestry to spread  
 The ground he treads, quick, quick, at once make purple  
 The carpeted footway, so that Justice now  
 Lead him at length to his unlooked-for home.  
 Thought, not o'ercome by sleep, with righteous measure  
 The rest shall fix as heaven and fate both will.

AGAMEMNON.

Issue of Leda, guardian of my home,  
 Long speeches fit long absence, so it seems,  
 For long thy speech; but honour to be true  
 Must come from other lips; as for these toys,  
 I prithee, fool me not with women's gauds,  
 Nor with a Persian courtier's low prostration  
 Grovel me open-mouthed a loud appeal,  
 Make not my footway envy's mark by spread  
 Of garments, keep such honour for the gods.  
 That mortal man on fair embroidery tramp,  
 Beshrew me, needs must bring some touch of fear.  
 I bid thee reverence me as man, not god.  
 The voice of glory cries aloud without  
 Footcloths, or broidery; a mind clear of ill  
 Is heaven's best gift; him count we happy, who  
 In sweet prosperity has ended life.  
 Fare I but always thus, good cheer is mine.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yea, but thy words my counsel must not cross.

AGAMEMNON.

Be well assured I shall not counsel mar.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hast vowed it so 'fore god, perchance from fear?



AGAMEMNON.

I've clinched, if ever man, a well-weighed verdict.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What think you Priam—had he wrought this deed?

AGAMEMNON.

I deem he sure had trodden on these webs.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay, but regard not thou the blame of men.

AGAMEMNON.

Strong as an oracle the people's voice.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Where there's no envy there no honour is.

AGAMEMNON.

A woman's heart should not be set on battle.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The fortunate can well afford defeat.

AGAMEMNON.

Prize you so dear this kind of victory?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Be ruled, and freely yield the palm to me.

AGAMEMNON.

Well, if this be your will, quick, prithee, loose  
My sandals, downtrod drudges of my foot.  
And may no bolt of envy from on high  
Light on me, as I tread these purple looms.  
Beshrew me, shame it is to mar with feet

This preciousness, and silver-priced webs.  
Enough of this, and now in courteous wise  
Take the strange lady in; heaven from on high  
Sends kindly glance on victory gently used.  
No one of choice puts on him the slave's yoke;  
And she, the picked perfection of much wealth,  
The army's gift, has followed me. But since  
I am constrained to heed thee in this thing,  
I pass into the palace trampling purple.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

There is the sea; and who shall drain it dry?  
That ever breeds fresh store of freshest purple,  
Dye equal-matched 'gainst silver, to dip robes in.  
Our house by grace of heaven hath store of this.  
The palace knows no fellowship with want.  
Full many a robe for trampling had I vowed,  
Devising back to win us this thy life,  
Had any oracle gone forth for us.  
Be there a root, comes leafage to a house,  
A shady barrier to the dogstar's rage.  
So when thou comest to the hearth at home,  
Thy coming brings in winter summer heat.  
And if Zeus turn the sour grape into wine,  
Why, then at once there's coolness, when the lord,  
The perfect crown o' the house, keeps state at home.  
O Zeus, thou perfect one, perfect my prayers,  
And have a care of what thou'rt going to perfect.

## CHORUS.

Why before my boding soul  
Ever, ever, on patrol  
Flits a phantom sentinel,  
With unbidden minstrelsy  
Chanting weird, without a fee,

Prophet-like its spell.  
No bold, frank hope  
These dark thoughts to disown  
Like riddling dreams  
Sits on my bosom's throne.  
Ah me! time's youth is dead,  
Since on the beached sand  
They moored the ships to land,  
When to fair Ilium bound  
The war-fleet sped.  
And now my eyes have known  
Their safe return at last  
By tidings of their own.  
Natheless a tune no lyre may swell,  
Self-inspired, a dirge of hell,  
Chants to itself my heart within,  
Shorn of the hope that once hath been.  
Not idly stirs my breast,  
The eddying tides sweep onward to a goal,  
Round a just presage circles still my soul.  
O may it all, I pray,  
Far from my thought  
Shadow-like pass away,  
Falling to naught.  
Great State still craves with unfilled maw,  
But Rottenness next door  
'Gainst the partition wall  
Thrusteth to make it fall;  
Fair fortune oft the shipman straight  
Sends on a sunken rock of fate,  
Then if wary skill  
With a measured sling,  
Forth the cargo fling,  
Heavy freight of ill  
Sinks not all the house;

Floats the good hull still.

A gift from Zeus ere now

Wide-branching, and earth's yearly furrowed plain,  
The famine pest has slain.

But 'neath our feet the black death rain

Of blood once fallen on the plain,

Oh! who shall charm it back again?

Else had not Zeus made warning dread

Of him, who knew right well

To call up from the dead.

And, but that firm-set fate had barred

The will of heaven 'gainst further weal,

My heart had far outstripped my tongue,

And poured forth all I feel.

But now in darkness low it moans,

Soul-stricken, hopeless aught good to unwind,

And all afire my mind.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And thou too, thou, Cassandra, hie thee in,

Since not in anger Zeus hath sent thee here,

Beneath our roof 'mongst many slaves to stand

Hard by the altar of our property.

Out from this car, be not disdainful, out.

Lo, e'en Alcmena's son, they say, of old

Stooped to be sold, and bowed him to the yoke.

And if it must be, and fate have it so,

Right gracious is a home of ancient wealth.

Upstarts, who never thought to reap good luck,

Are cruel masters ever, and hard-eyed.

With us you will find a slave's due is respected.

CHORUS.

To thee she speaks it, plain, and makes an end.

Perchance, caught in the fatal meshes you

Will yield, if yield you will: may be you yield not.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Well; if she be not dowered swallow-like  
With new, strange accents, that I speak sinks in,  
Reaches her sense, and I persuade by speaking.

CHORUS.

Follow. As matters stand, she counsels best.  
Be ruled, and leave your high seat in the chariot.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I cannot dance attendance on her here  
Outside, the sheep already round the altar  
Stand for the slaughter, by the mid-hearth stone  
For those who never thought such grace to see.  
And you, if aught you heed, drag not the time.  
But if unwitting you our meaning take not  
Speak with outlandish hand, instead of tongue.

CHORUS.

The stranger needs, methinks, a clear expounder.  
Yea, she is like a wild thing newly caught.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye, she is frantic, and heeds evil promptings.  
Fresh from a newly captured city come,  
Yet knows she not to bear the bit before  
She foam away her stubborn fit in blood.  
I'll fling away no more words to be scorned.

CHORUS.

But I, I pity, and will not be angered.  
Come leave, poor lady, leave the chariot empty;  
What must be must, yield, and the new yoke try.

## AGAMEMNON.

41

CASSANDRA.

O waly, waly, Gods and earth, woe, woe,  
Apollo, O Apollo.

CHORUS.

O why this wailing for the prophet king,  
He wants no wailer, far, far other he.

CASSANDRA.

O waly, waly, Gods and earth, woe, woe  
Apollo, O Apollo.

CHORUS.

Again with lips of woe she calls the god,  
Who has no part or parcel with the woeful.

CASSANDRA.

Apollo, thou destroyer, O Apollo,  
Lord of fair streets, Apollyon to me;  
For thou hast clean destroyed me once again.

CHORUS.

The prophetess is like to tell her sorrows,  
Heaven's spirit rests in her albeit a slave.

CASSANDRA.

Apollo, thou destroyer, O Apollo,  
Lord of fair streets, Apollyon to me.  
Ah!  
Where hast thou led me, ah! ah! to what home?

CHORUS.

To the Atridæ's, an thou knowest it not,  
I tell thee, and thou wilt not find it false.

## AGAMEMNON.

CASSANDRA.

Nay, to a god-aborred abode, they, they the secret  
know;  
Those bloody hands of kinsmen, foul murders, hangman  
cords,  
The gory human slaughter-house, and blood bespattered  
boards.

CHORUS.

The stranger has keen nostrils like a hound,  
She runs a blood-slot and will run it down.

CASSANDRA.

These are my tell-tale witnesses, on them my faith  
is set;  
See, see those weeping infants, those gaping gashes see,  
And roasted flesh in gobbets of which a father ate.

CHORUS.

Indeed—we oft have heard thy soothsaying fame,  
And know it, but we want no prophets here.

CASSANDRA.

Woe, woe, good god, what has she now in view?  
What sorrow this so great, and new?  
Foul deed and great in view within these walls,  
On kith and kin too heavy: healing hand  
Is not, far off all champions stand.

CHORUS.

This that you now foretell I know not, those  
I knew, the city is all loud with them.

CASSANDRA.

Woe, woe, wretch, wilt thou bring it to pass?

What! thy own wedded lord,  
 Fresh from the bath, and gay?  
 How the end can I say?  
 Soon will it come, O woe!  
 Hand upon hand shoots,  
     Blow follows blow.

CHORUS.

I cannot grasp it, first you riddle, then  
 Your blind oracular sayings baffle me.

CASSANDRA.

Ah! ah! alack, what do I see?  
     A very net of hell.  
 She is the net, his consort she,  
 Consort—aye consort in murder as well.  
     Let a fierce band  
     In the family stand,  
 And howl out their cries  
 O'er a dead sacrifice.  
     Stone her with stones.

CHORUS.

What fury do you hound on in the palace  
 To cry so loud? your story likes me not.  
     Back to my heart run  
     The pale life-drops;  
     So in life's setting glow,  
     Blood, 'neath a mortal blow,  
     Trickles and stops.  
     No halt in doom.

CASSANDRA.

Ha, ha, hold the cow back, beware,  
     Let not the bull come near.



She has caught him in the robe, to her horns of death  
betrayed,  
She gores him, and he falls in the watery ambushade,  
I tell you the hap of the murderous bath-room.

## CHORUS.

I cannot boast the knack of oracles,  
But to my mind this wears an ugly face.  
Never on happy mission wings  
Word of prophetic lore.  
But when the heart is sore,  
A cunning crooning tangle brings  
A gloomy presage evermore.

## CASSANDRA.

Alas, alas, my wretched ill-starred lot,  
For now I fling  
My own death in the pot,  
My own dirge sing.  
Whither, O whither hast thou led me now  
Ah hapless me!  
Save to a slaughter-house,  
To die with thee,  
Naught else, woe's me.

## CHORUS.

Thou'rt frenzy-driven, heaven-posessed,  
A tune untuneable thy strain,  
As she who still for Itys lost,  
Lost Itys, makes her plain,  
The small brown bird, the nightingale,  
With unfilled ceaseless wail,  
A life of ever-springing bale.

## CASSANDRA.

Alas! O happy nightingale, thou songstress clear,

he gods a winged garment round thee cast,  
happy lot without or sigh or tear,  
ut I, ah I, must cloven be by the two-edged blade at  
last.

CHORUS.

Whence hast these trooping fancies?  
These heaven-sent dooms to tell?  
Great horrors forth thou chantest  
With harsh dull knell,  
Anon, a trumpet pealing.  
Where is the boundary set  
To thy sad divination,  
To the paths of fate?

CASSANDRA.

Woe for thy marriage, Paris, woe.  
Death spread the wedding-feast  
For thine, and thee.  
Alas, Scamander, stream my fathers drank,  
In nurture fair increased,  
Ah me, ah me,  
I rose on thy dear bank.  
Now by Cocytus' shore, and Acheron,  
I must, belike, voice my prophetic song,  
Erelong, erelong.

CHORUS.

That word is this so plain thy tongue hath spoke?  
A child in years might know.  
My heart is stricken by a bloody stroke,  
As from thy sad lips flow  
The plaintive accents of thy fate.  
I listen, and my wonder still doth grow.

CASSANDRA.

Alas for the weary weary teen

Of the lost city, quite, quite lost.  
Alas for the lavish cost  
Of herds wide-ranging o'er the pastures green,  
Before the towers, that on the altar bled,  
Alas my sire, how little it bested,  
But that the city fared as now it fares, and I  
Must soon with my hot life upon the ground low lie.

## CHORUS.

Doom follows doom in dismal wise,  
Some power of dark design  
With heavy onset from on high  
Constrains thee chant a wailing cry,  
Sorrows of deadly assault?  
What end shall follow, I am all at fault?

## CASSANDRA.

Lo, now no longer shall the oracle  
Come peeping from a veil like maid new wed.  
But bright i' the eye of the sun 'tis like to blow  
Onsweeping, so that right up into light  
Shall surge a deed of darkness like a wave,  
Worse than before; but I'll lay bare my meaning,  
Riddling no more; and ye now bear me witness,  
As I scent out the trail, and run it down,  
Of crimes done in the days of old—go to—  
These halls in everlasting tenancy  
A band that sings in tune, and yet an ill tune,  
For ill's the burden of it, holds in fee.  
And drunk with human blood to make them bolder  
A revel rout of Furies, kith and kin,  
Full hard to be ejected keeps possession.  
And sitting in these halls they chant their chant,  
The primal curse. The next take up the strain  
And loathe the brother's bed so damned to him  
That trampled on its sanctity. How now?

Say, have I missed, or hit in archer wise?  
Or am I but a lying prophetess,  
A babbling tramp from door to door? Speak out,  
When I am gone, on oath, how well I knew  
(No hearsay tale) these walls, and all their crimes.

CHORUS.

How can an oath, firm rivet-bolt of honour,  
Bring aught of balm with it? I marvel rather,  
Born beyond seas that thou art mistress of  
This city's life, and tell its alien story  
As though thou hadst lived here ever.

CASSANDRA.

King Apollo

The prophet, throned me in this office high.

CHORUS.

Smitten with love of thee although divine.

CASSANDRA.

In the old days I shamed to speak of this.

CHORUS.

Aye, aye, prosperity is dainty-nice.

CASSANDRA.

He wrestled sore, breathing great love for me.

CHORUS.

What, did he close with thee in wedlock's bond?

CASSANDRA.

I gave assent, and after played him false.

CHORUS.

When thou hadst first been ta'en with skill divine?

CASSANDRA.

Already I foretold my countrymen  
All that would happen.

CHORUS.

How then didst thou 'scape  
The ire of Loxias?

CASSANDRA.

After this my sin  
No one gave heed, naught no one heeded me.

CHORUS.

Yea, but to us thy words are words of sooth.

CASSANDRA.

Ha! ha! woe, woe. O horror! horror! ha!  
Once more a fierce fit of true prophecy  
Makes my brain reel, and mads me with its onset.  
What! see ye not these sitting in the halls,  
Babes, like to shapes in dreams, children, who died  
Slain by their kith and kin? and, oh! they fill  
Their hands with flesh, viands of their own bodies,  
Lo there, I see them holding, piteous load,  
Entrails and heart, of which a father tasted.  
For this I say that one now plots revenge,  
A dastard lion, making his lair i' the bed,  
Lurking at home, ah me, for him, my master,  
On his return; aye, master mine, for I  
Must needs a slave bear a slave's yoke; and he  
Lord of the fleet, uprooter of Troy's city  
Knows not what she, the lewd adulteress  
With her smooth tongue, and fair face-welcome spread,  
Most like a lurking fiend, perdition on't!  
Will work, such is her daring. She, a woman,  
Murders a man: what name of loathsome creature  
Shall I do well to call her? Shall I call her

Viper? or Scylla housed in rocks, the bane  
Of sailors? or a raging devil's dam  
Breathing forth war implacable against  
Nearest and dearest? what a shout of triumph,  
As in a battle when the rout begins,  
She shouted reckless-fierce, the while she gives  
Glad-seeming welcome to his safe return.  
Believe 't, or not, it is all one to me.  
What matter? surely that which comes will come.  
And, standing by ere long, you 'll pitying say,  
Alack! she was too true a prophetess.

CHORUS.

I know and shudder at Thyestes' feast  
On his own children's flesh, fear grips me fast  
The while I listen to thy true recital  
Told to the life; but when I hear the rest  
Out of the running all aside I stray.

CASSANDRA.

I say your eyes shall see Agamemnon die.

CHORUS.

Whist, wretched one, hush up a reverent lip.

CASSANDRA.

What boots it? no glad deity presides.

CHORUS.

Not, if it shall be: may it never come.

CASSANDRA.

You pray—but they are setting hand to axe.

CHORUS.

What man is he that brings this woe to pass?

CASSANDRA.

Man—how you must have glanced beside my drift.

CHORUS.

Yea, for I cannot grasp how he's to do it.

CASSANDRA.

And yet I speak the speech of Hellas well.

CHORUS.

The Pythian oracle speaks well, but hard.

CASSANDRA.

Ho, ho, the fire burns, how it comes upon me.  
O pity—O wolfish Apollo—woe, woe's me—  
She, she, the lioness couching with the wolf,  
What time the princely lion is away,  
Will slay me, woeful creature; and, as one  
Mixing a potion, in the cup of wrath  
She'll fling payment for me; lo now, she boasts,  
And whets the knife for him, that she will have  
Her price in blood for that he brought me hither.  
How now, why do I keep these mockeries,  
This wand, these prophet wreaths that necklace me?  
You, you shall perish first or ere I perish.  
Off, to perdition with ye, lie there, I  
Shall follow soon; go, pour your wealth of curses  
On someone else now I am done with, go.  
Lo there, Apollo's self is stripping me  
Of my prophetic garb; aye, thou didst once  
Look on, and see me scoffed at in these robes  
'Mongst friends and foes alike, no difference.  
Yea, taunted as a gipsy tramp, like some  
Poor wretched witchcraft-monger, hunger-pinched.  
All this I bore, but now the prophet king

Has made an end of me, the prophetess;  
 And brought me to this present deadly fortune.  
 No more a priestess at my father's altar,  
 A butcher's block awaits me, slashed to death  
 By a warm, bloody stroke of sacrifice.  
 But not unrecked of by the gods I fall.  
 In due course an avenger comes for me,  
 A mother-slaying seed, to quit a father.  
 Banished, a wanderer, outcast from this land,  
 He shall return, and set the coping-stone  
 On all this bloody business for his friends.  
 A mighty oath is registered in heaven,  
 His murdered father's fall shall bring him back.  
 Why then do I a sojourner make moan?  
 I, who in days of yore saw Ilium's homes  
 Fare as they fared, and those who dwelt in them  
 Pass in like manner by heaven's verdict judged.  
 I too will go, I too will face my death.  
 And now I greet these gates of the grave, and pray  
 That a right mortal blow may light on me,  
 So without struggle I may close these eyes  
 When the life current's gently ebbd away.

CHORUS.

O lady, thou most woeful, yet most wise,  
 Much hast thou said; yet if thou know'st in sooth  
 Thy doom, how like a heifer driven of the god  
 Tread'st thou the path right boldly to the altar?

CASSANDRA.

There is no 'scaping, none, friends, save in time.

CHORUS.

But still the last in time bears off the palm.



CASSANDRA.

The hour is come, to fly is little gain.

CHORUS.

Thou meet'st a wretched fate with dauntless heart.

CASSANDRA.

No happy person hears such praise as this.

CHORUS.

Men count it good to die a glorious death.

CASSANDRA.

Woe for thee, father, and thy gallant sons.

CHORUS.

What is 't? what terror makes thee start aside?

CASSANDRA.

Alas, alas!

CHORUS.

Why this alas? perchance some loathed thing?

CASSANDRA.

These palace walls blood-drip and murder reek.

CHORUS.

How now? this savour is of sacrifice.

CASSANDRA.

A stench of strong whiffs like an open grave.

CHORUS.

No Syrian preciousness of incense this

You tell of, for the palace to be proud of.

CASSANDRA.

I go, my own and Agamemnon's fate  
To wail inside these doors; enough of life.  
Ah me, strangers  
I quail not, as a poor bird at a twig,  
For nought. O bear this witness to me dead.  
When woman dies for woman, she for me,  
And man for man, for the ill-wedded husband.  
I pray you grant a dying stranger this.

CHORUS.

Poor lady, how thy fate foreknown I pity.

CASSANDRA.

I fain would utter a last speech, no wail  
Over myself. But I appeal to the sun,  
The last light I shall see, for my avengers  
To pay my hated murderers their due,  
At the same time, for me, poor slave, who've fallen  
An easy prey. Alas for mortal state!  
The fortunate—a limner's sketch, no more.  
And when misfortune comes, comes a wet sponge  
And rubs all out; and of the fortunes twain  
The first I pity far more than the last.

CHORUS.

Great fortune never glutted is.  
None ever shuts the door  
Of worshipped, finger-pointed halls,  
And cries come in no more.  
Look now on him—the Blessed Ones  
Have granted him to sack  
Great Priam's city, home he comes,

## AGAMEMNON.

The heaven-exalted, back.  
But must he now pay blood by blood,  
And with the dead in death  
By death the death-tally make good,  
Then who of mortal breath,  
That hears this tale,  
Could say he stood  
Secure no bale  
Should ever mar  
His harmless star?

AGAMEMNON (*from within*).

Ah me, I am stricken home a mortal blow.

CHORUS.

Silence! someone cries aloud stricken a mortal stroke.

AGAMEMNON.

Alas, again, again, smitten again.

CHORUS.

Lo! I deem the deed is done by the groaning of the King.  
Should we not together hold sure counsel one and all?

CHORUS I.

I give my verdict, raise the city, cry,  
Ho to the palace! rescue, citizens!

CHORUS 2.

My verdict is, to burst in with all speed,  
And clench their guilt with the blood-dripping sword.

CHORUS 3.

And I am one with such a vote, I give  
My word for action, now or never, act.

CHORUS 4.

Sight can decide; to judge by th' opening scene  
They mean to play the part of monarchs here.

CHORUS 5.

We dally, whilst they trample the good name  
Of caution in the mire: their hand sleeps not.

CHORUS 6.

I know not what I ought to counsel; but  
Sure am I action needeth counsel first.

CHORUS 7.

And I, like you, am baffled, nor see how  
To bring a dead man back to life by words.

CHORUS 8.

But shall we go on living coward lives  
With these vile blots on honour as our leaders?

CHORUS 9.

Perish the thought, nay, better far to die.  
Death is a milder lot than tyranny.

CHORUS 10.

Are we to take his cries as proof of death,  
And from his groans infer the King is slain?

CHORUS 11.

We ought to have sure knowledge ere we speak,  
For guesswork and sure knowledge are not one.

CHORUS 12.

I sum up on all counts, and this decide,  
To make sure how it fares with Atreus' son.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Much have I said before to suit the time,  
And shame not now to say the opposite.  
How else to hated foe, meting out hate  
Under the garb of friendship, fence the toils  
So close, and high, that none may overleap?  
To me this day of reckoning for a day  
Of triumph long ago has come at last.  
I stand just where I struck, over my deed.  
I did it, and I disavow it not,  
So that he could not 'scape, or ward off death.  
For, like a fish in endless meshes caught,  
I net him in rich folds of wealth and doom.  
Two blows I gave him, with two groans he fell,  
And lay outstretched before me; as he lay  
Fallen, I threw him yet a third stroke in,  
Votive thank-offering to the king beneath,  
Saviour, who keeps the dead safe. So he fell,  
And gasped his spirit out, and sobbing forth  
A quick, sharp spurt of blood, he rains on me  
Black rain of gory dew, and I exult  
With joy, as joys the seed-plot in heaven's gift  
Of liquid gems, what time it teems in travail  
Ere bursts the bud.  
Ye have it all now, reverend sires of Argos,  
And may rejoice an't please you—but for me,  
I glory in 't, and were it a seemly thing  
To pour a cup, libation o'er the slain,  
Now 'twould be just to do't, exceeding just.  
For such a chalice has he filled with curses  
For us at home, and drained it dry himself.

## CHORUS.

I marvel at thy bold tongue and fierce lips,  
That darest to vaunt so loudly o'er a man.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

treat me like a witless woman, I  
 : with unflinching heart this to your teeth,  
 like it you or not, all's one to me.  
 re lies King Agamemnon, aye, my lord,  
 d, work of right true workman, this right hand,  
 re lies he, and the fact can none gainsay.

CHORUS.

Woman, what devil's mess hast gulped?  
 Or root of earth sent up?  
 Or has the rushing wave for thee  
 Brewed devil's broth to sup?  
 That thou hast heaped a people's curse  
 As incense on thy head.  
 Cast off hast thou, cut off; and thee  
 Thy city shall cast off to be  
 To all her sons abhorrence dread.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye, now canst play the judge, and bid me take  
 Exile, the people's hate, and open-mouthed  
 Revilings, dumb enough in days of yore,  
 With naught to say 'gainst him, when he, forsooth,  
 Rating her life no higher than a sheep,  
 One sheep of many fleecy flocks that ranged  
 Unnumbered, slew his daughter—  
 Aye, his own child, dear travail of my womb,  
 To charm the Thracian storm winds. Ought you not  
 To have hunted him an outcast from the land,  
 Guerdon of his foul crimes? but my deeds find  
 Sharp sentence at your bar. I tell you, I,—  
 Vent threats, I can threat too; know I'm prepared  
 To own you master when you've won the day.

But if heaven give its verdict th' other way,  
Taught sense, you'll learn at last to tame your pride.

## CHORUS.

High soars thy purpose, trumpet-tongued thy speech  
All wonted dues defies.  
Thou hast supped blood, blood-mad, the blood-spot gleams,  
Unrecked of, o'er thine eyes.  
Yet comes a day when reft of friends, alone,  
Thou must pay blow for blow, and stricken shalt atone.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now hear thou too my solemn gage on oath;  
By the full vengeance for my daughter dear,  
The Blood-fiend and the Fury, at whose shrine  
I slew him, never fear, I trust, shall set  
Foot cross my threshold, whilst Ægisthus lights  
His fire upon my hearthstone, as of old  
Heart-true to me, no little shield to embolden.  
Low lies the man who did me the foul wrong,  
Of each Chryseis under Ilium wall  
Minion; and she his slave, and portent-monger,  
Aye, and his paramour, with her prophet-tongue,  
His faithful bedfellow, and on the benches  
Shipmate with him—well, they have got their due,  
They two; for he—yonder he lies; and she,  
She chanted her last death-wail like a swan,  
And now lies there, his love, thrown in for me,  
A dainty side-dish for the wife to taste,  
A titbit in her banquet of revenge.

## CHORUS.

Come, fate, come, not with thy hand of pain,  
Nor with bed-weary creep,

Come, with all speed, and bring to me  
The boon of endless sleep.  
Fall'n is my gracious guardian power,  
After all perils past,  
In a woman's bitter stour,  
By a woman slain at last.  
Woe, Helen, crooked-hearted, woe,  
How many lives didst thou,  
Beneath the walls of Troy,  
Thou, only thou, how many lives destroy.  
And now, thou cankered Hate,  
Embedded in these walls,  
Bane of their lord,  
Thou too hast brought about  
A perfect bloom  
Of blood-wreathed fate,  
Through blood, which seas shall not wash out.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Pray not death to make an end,  
And no wrath on Helen bend,  
Aiming all awry,  
As blood-guilty, and that she,  
Only she,  
Many a Danaan made to die ;  
Misery, O misery.

## CHORUS.

Dread Spirit, whose resistless shock  
Falls heavy on the double stock  
Of the Tantalidæ,  
Thou who makest woman's might  
Bear rule to my heart's despite,  
Lo, how like a carrion crow  
On a corpse alight,



## AGAMEMNON.

He screeches forth his hideous note  
Of devilish delight.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou hast set thy tongue aright  
Right thought to trace.  
Now thou call'st the bloated fiend  
That battens on the race.  
Lust of lapping blood from him  
Is in the bone inbred,  
Ere the old grief waxes dim  
Runs a fresh stream red.

## CHORUS.

Thy tale is of a mighty fiend, and heavy wrath to find  
A deadly tale of ravening doom, unsated, here enshrined.  
But Zeus rules, Zeus, naught without him doth fall,  
Sole origin, sole worker of it all,  
All mortal state from Zeus begins and ends,  
And all this roll of doom heaven's verdict sends.  
Alas, alas !  
My king, my king, how shall I mourn thee well?  
How bid my love its burden tell?  
Thou liest in this close-knit spider's net,  
Breathing thy life out by a felon blow,  
Alas the caitiff couch that thou hast met,  
By murderous guile laid low.  
The two-edged blade foul hand did whet.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou blazonest forth this deed as mine.  
Yet count me not  
As Agamemnon's spouse.  
The ancient doomster of the line,  
The bitter fiend  
Of Atreus of the fell carouse,

Hath put my likeness on, I wot;  
And in the semblance of the wife  
Of this dead man, hath ta'en the life,  
And quit the score  
And crowned with sacrifice full-aged  
Babes slain of yore.

## CHORUS.

Who will uphold the plea,  
That from this murder stain  
Thy hand is free?  
But the blood-fiend of the race,  
Perchance, thy mate may be.  
Black Violence moves on perforce,  
When kindred veins  
Jet forth blood-jets, course on course,  
Until he reach a goal,  
Where he shall pay the whole,  
That justice claims for that red rain  
From children slain.  
Alas, alas!  
My king, my king, how shall I mourn thee well?  
How bid my love its burden tell?  
Thou liest in this close-knit spider's net,  
Breathing thy life out by a felon blow;  
Alas, the caitiff couch that thou hast met,  
By murderous guile laid low.  
The two-edged blade foul hand did whet.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

No caitiff death, I ween, he met,  
Who at the first a wily net  
Within his own home set.  
Alas my tender shoot,  
Springing from his root,

## AGAMEMNON.

Iphigenia, wept for aye,  
 Worthy meed for worthy deed,  
 As to her he dealt, he felt.  
 Let him ne'er on Hades coast  
 Make rude boast.  
 His sword began, and he hath paid  
 The forfeit in the game he made,  
 Sword-stricken by a deadly blade.

## CHORUS.

O baffled, lost ! This great House falls,  
 I know not where, bereft of sense,  
 To turn my ready-witted brain.  
 The pattering drops that sap the walls  
 Affright, the pattering blood-rain ;  
 It drops no more,  
 The dark streams pour ;  
 And fate, the sharp-edged judgement sword,  
 To do another deed abhorred  
 Is busy whetting, oft of yore  
 On the same grindstone ground before.  
 O earth, O earth, why didst thou not take me,  
 Ere these my eyes  
 Had looked on him who lies,  
 And makes his bed, and aye abides,  
 Within the bath-room's silver sides?  
 Who will bury, who will plain him?  
 Wilt thou dare to do it, thou,  
 Who hast slain him?  
 Slain thine own true lord.  
 Wilt thou o'er him dole,  
 In lieu of mighty deeds of bale,  
 An empty graceless grace out to his soul,  
 From an unequal scale?  
 Who with tears will pour

The last tribute on his tomb  
From loyal true heart store?  
And solemn benison sing  
Over the hero King?

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

It boots not thee his due to tell.  
My hand struck him down,  
    Down he fell,  
And down shall lay him with no knell  
    Of wailing from his home.  
But with a glad accord,  
Iphigenia, daughter dear,  
Shall at the short, quick passage near  
    O' the doleful ford,  
    As is right meet,  
Run fondly her great sire to greet,  
And round him fling her arms, I wis,  
    With loving kiss.

## CHORUS.

Taunt follows taunt; this way and that  
    The hard-fought judgement sways.  
The harrier's harried, and the sword  
    The sword repays.  
But Zeus abides, and this abideth fast,  
    That deed is meed,  
    Full paid in after time.  
    This law knows no reprieve.  
Who can this cursèd seed out of the house off cast?  
Destruction and the race close glued together cleave.

## CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yea, thou hast entered now with truth  
    On a prophetic path of sooth,

Let be—I fain would make a pact  
With this blood-fiend that dogs the race  
Of Pleisthenes, and seal 't on oath ;  
To rest and bear my case,  
Though hard to bear ;  
And then for him to pass  
Out of the door  
For evermore,  
And worry and wear  
Another prey  
Of other men  
With deaths where kinsmen kinsmen slay,  
And I, left mistress of shorn state,  
Would cry full quits,  
Had I clean purged the bloody fits  
Of murder-madness from these halls,  
By which each fells and falls.

## ÆGISTHUS.

O smiling light of justice-dealing day  
Now I would say at last the gods take heed  
Of mortals, and look down, and venge earth's woes,  
Since now I see him to my heart's delight  
Lie there in robes woven of hell, the debt  
Paid to the full, his father's bloody craft.  
Atreus, the King of this land, to speak plain,  
On a disputed claim of sovereignty,  
Drove forth an outcast from his city and home  
My father, his own brother in blood, Thyestes.  
When back he came a suppliant to the hearth,  
Unhappy man, sure guarantee he found  
His life-blood should not wet his native sod,  
There where he stood: and this man's godless sire,  
Atreus, with better haste than love, made show  
To keep high festival with goodly cheer,

And set a feast of love before my father,  
A dish of children's flesh; himself apart,  
At the high table sat, and hid the parts  
Extreme of feet and hands; unwittingly, then,  
At once my father took the mess disguised,  
And ate of deep damnation to the race;  
As there thou seest, then too late he found  
He had done a deed abhorred, and with a cry  
He fell back from that shambles vomiting;  
And prayed a prayer of doom, of crushing doom,  
On Pelops' race, and made that dish upset  
A righteous curse, that so kicked loathsome off  
Might perish all the sons of Pleisthenes.  
And that is why thou seest him there lie dead.  
Yea I this murder with just needle stitched;  
For me, a little babe, the thirteenth child,  
He ousted with my father; now grown up,  
Justice has brought me home again: and I  
Gripped him though far away, and set about  
All cunning traps of malice in his path.  
Now I can die with honour, I have seen  
Him lie there caught in Retribution's net.

## CHORUS.

I like not glorying in the midst of ill,  
Ægisthus, thou hast slain this man, thou sayest,  
With will deliberate, thou alone hast planned  
This piteous murder, but I tell thee, know't  
Of truth, thine own head shall not scape its due,  
The stone-hurled curses at the people's hands.

## ÆGISTHUS.

And speak'st thou thus, the lowest bench thy place,  
Whilst those above thee pull stroke-oar, and rule?  
Hard task it is for age, thou'lt find it so,

Old man, to learn, when chidden into sense.  
Bonds, age, and hungry hours right potent are,  
Of excellent virtue, wizard-physickers,  
To reach the soul; hast eyes, and seest not this?  
Kick not against the goad, lest the kick hurt.

## CHORUS.

Woman, on his return fresh from the war,  
Thou stay-at-home, who didst betray his bed,  
Thou hast a warrior-chief thus done to death.

## ÆGISTHUS.

This speech too is the parent stock of tears,  
Thy tongue is Orpheus upside down, for he  
Drew all things living by delight of song;  
You think to lead by currish snarlings, you,  
But beaten, we shall see thee gentle-tame.

## CHORUS.

As if, forsooth, thou shalt be king in Argos.  
Thou, who didst scheme his death, but didst not dare,  
No, didst not dare a hand to lay to it.

## ÆGISTHUS.

For why—to cheat, and trick was woman's work,  
And I, an ancient enemy suspect.  
Out of his coffers I will make the means  
To curb the citizens; and stubborn mettle,  
The high-fed colt, that draws not in the traces,  
I'll lade with heavy yoke; foul-favoured darkness  
Shall, cheek by jowl with hunger, play the host,  
And see him soft enough.

## CHORUS.

Dastard, why didst not in the lists, thyself

Spoil him of life? Thy partner did the deed,  
A woman, plague-spot of her country, and  
Her country's gods. O, if on mortal ground  
Orestes see the light, that home at last  
He may return, O blessed hap, and wreak  
Reprieveless execution on you both!

ÆGISTHUS.

Art thou then so ready both in word and deed? thou'lt  
rue it.

\* \* \* \* \*

ÆGISTHUS.

Come, set on, my trusty guards, 'tis time to do and dare.

CHORUS.

Come, set on, each hand on hilt, be ready, every one.

ÆGISTHUS.

I am ready hand on hilt, I too, to do and die.

CHORUS.

Lo, we take thy word, die, die, we try the venture, we.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Do not, do not, dearest lord, pile up new ills on old.  
Ah, to reap what must be reaped is harvest all too sad.  
Ah, enough, enough of ill, no, no more blood, I pray.  
Go, my lord, and go, old men, to your allotted homes,  
Before you do and suffer wrong, sufficient what is done.  
If but this might have an end I would make truce  
with ill,

Stricken, sorely stricken by the grievous wrath of  
heaven.

I have said my say, a woman's say, if any care to heed.



ÆGISTHUS.

Shall they cull the blossom of their idle tongues on me,  
Hurling out their reckless words, and tempting destiny,  
Witless, all astray from sense, and chafe their lord with  
scorn?

CHORUS.

Sons of Argos never learnt to fawn on guilty power.

ÆGISTHUS.

Ah, my hand in days to come shall venge me yet on  
thee.

CHORUS.

Not, if heaven make straight a path to bring Orestes  
home.

ÆGISTHUS.

Yea, I know the banished feed on hopes as daily bread.

CHORUS.

Oh, make fat thy heart, and spit on justice; 'tis thine  
hour.

ÆGISTHUS.

Surely thou shalt pay in full the score, thy folly's debt.

CHORUS.

Brag, and strut, just like a cock in presence of the hen.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Take no heed of these vain currish speeches; I and thou  
Rule, for all is ours, and we will settle all things well.





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